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RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHND/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE 0455
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE 0521
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE 2102
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI IMMEDIATE 1338
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 11 PARIS 004357

SIPDIS

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR
NSC FOR NSA HADLEY
DEPT ALSO FOR EUR, NEA, SA, EAP, PM, E, EB, G, WHA, AND AF

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TAGS PREL, OVIP, NATO, UNO, YI, RS, IR, IS, LE, FR

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SARKOZY'S FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE
U.S.: POLICY COORDINATION WITH A SELF-CONSCIOUSLY INDEPENDENT FRANCE

Classified By: Ambassador Craig R. Stapleton for reasons 1.4. (b) & (d) .

1. (SBU) Introduction and Summary: The Nicolas Sarkozy who arrives in Washington November 6 is in robust political health. He completely dominates the French political scene. He has quickly asserted French leadership in Europe and staked out new positions on a wide range of issues. He is energetic, in full command at home, he is determined to make a difference in the world.
2. (SBU) While not central to his Presidential campaign, Sarkozy has quickly asserted French leadership in Europe and staked out new positions on a wide range of issues. He is energetic, in full command at home, he is determined to make a difference in the world.
3. (C) We continue to believe that Sarkozy represents an important opportunity. Energetic, in full command at home, he is determined to make a difference in the world.

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such as the environment, GMOs and Turkey's relationship with Europe -- as demonstrations of France's independent policy course. His emphasis of the environment, GMOs and Turkey's relationship with Europe -- as demonstrations of France's independent policy course. His emphasis of the environment, GMOs and Turkey's relationship with Europe -- as demonstrations of France's independent policy course.

4. (U) In addition to setting the scene for Sarkozy's first official visit to Washington, this message iterates the state of play in a long list of areas. PART ONE: SARKOZY FIVE MONTHS INTO HIS PRESIDENCY

5. (SBU) Nicolas Sarkozy's visit to Washington follows an exceptionally long "state of grace" (as the French call a political honeymoon), one that has allowed him to establish a strong relationship with the U.S. President.
6. (SBU) Sarkozy's success is attributable to several factors. While Candidate Sarkozy ran a hard right election campaign geared to winning over the French electorate, he has since moved to the center and is now seen as a pragmatic leader.
7. (SBU) Immediately after his election in May, Sarkozy embarked on a policy of inclusiveness ("ouverture"), bringing in leading figures of the French political establishment.
8. (SBU) Over the past few weeks, shadows have entered this unnaturally bright picture. Current polling suggests that while support for Sarkozy remains high, it is not as high as it once was.

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insists that this time unions will not be able to scuttle this or any other part of the government's reform program -- while continuing to stress the need for reform.

9. (SBU) Sarkozy's unexpected willingness to compromise on several of his reform measures may signal recognition of the hard economic realities facing France.

10. (SBU) The transport unions are but one of the constituencies Sarkozy will offend in shaking the French economy loose from policies that have kept it stagnant.

11. (SBU) France's broader economic environment will not make the reform process any easier. Having promised the electorate measures that would be difficult to implement, Sarkozy faces a tough task.

12. (SBU) Sarkozy is keen on unleashing market forces to reinvigorate the French economy, but he is less than laissez-faire when it comes to reforming the labor market.

13. (SBU) At the macroeconomic level, Sarkozy has been highly critical of the European Central Bank's tight money, strong Euro policy and he is likely to push for a more flexible approach.

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agreed Eurozone commitments to bring budgets back into balance. In both cases, Eurozone partners have little recourse and France can ride for a while.

14. (SBU) The U.S.-French economic relationship remains robust, with over \$1 billion in commercial transactions per day taking place between the two countries.
15. (C) On permanent overdrive and intense in the best of times, Sarkozy's recent divorce raises questions about his ability to maintain his focus on the job.
16. (C) Notwithstanding the debate swirling around him and his slight decline in the polls, Sarkozy's political health remains strong. He continues to be a popular leader.

PART TWO:
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KEY POLICY ISSUES: WHERE THEY ARE AND WHERE WE WANT THEM TO BE

17. (C) The White House has already publicly enumerated key topics on the visit agenda: Afghanistan, Iran, Middle East Peace, Lebanon, Darfur, and the Sudan.
18. (C) Iraq: The sudden and dramatic French decision, days following the President's meeting in Kennebunkport, to break with previous policy and support the U.S. in its effort to remove Saddam Hussein.
19. (C) Iran: Sarkozy's blunt language on the "unacceptability" of a militarily nuclear Iran, and the need to maintain maximum pressure on the Iranian government.

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ability to influence Iranian choices, and how best to maintain international pressure toward that end. Having just met with Israeli PM Olmert to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

20. (C) NATO: In one of his first acts as President, Sarkozy launched a defense "white paper" commission to review France's defense and security policy. The commission's findings will be published in the coming months.

1) strengthening European defense structures by developing Europe's own capabilities to plan and carry out defense and security operations, and

2) seeking French representation in the highest "decision making posts of NATO." The MFA and defense establishment uniformly caution us against a unilateral French approach.

21. (C) Afghanistan: After a moment of hesitation during his Presidential campaign, Sarkozy now publicly highlights the importance of French leadership in the war on terror.
22. (SBU) Environment/Climate Change: Climate Change: On his election day, Sarkozy called for a greater U.S. leadership role on climate issues. He has also pledged to sign the Kyoto Protocol.
23. (C) Democracy Promotion/Burma: Under President Sarkozy, the French position on Burma has converged with that of the U.S. France vigorously supports the U.S. effort to bring about a democratic transition in Burma.
24. (C) Russia: During his first presidential visit to Russia on October 9-10, Sarkozy's advisors were reportedly struck by Putin's defiant attitude toward the U.S.

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calls for a more "comprehensive Afghanistan strategy," integrating military support and civilian reconstruction, and including a timeline for success.

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from the Chirac era. Sarkozy has abandoned Chirac's notion of Russia as a counterweight to the U.S., and does not shy away from directly addressing the Russian threat.

28. (C/NF) Georgia: In Moscow October 9-10, Sarkozy told Putin that France opposes full NATO membership for Georgia (although we have been assuring the U.S. that we support Georgia's aspirations).
29. (C) Kosovo: This is an opportunity for the President to reaffirm Sarkozy's commitment to an independent Kosovo. Sarkozy has stated numerous times that he supports Kosovo's independence.

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independence.

30. (C) Missile Defense: The French agree that Russia's objections to the planned system are politically driven, reflecting a Russian view of the threat from Iran.
31. (C) CFE: The French government remains concerned over the Russian threat to suspend participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE).
32. (C) Lebanon: Sarkozy has not been as closely associated as FM Kouchner with French efforts to help Lebanon elect a new president and emerge from civil war.

SIPDIS over Lebanon continue, although we differ over tactics and the risks attached to any strategy that would allow the majority to elect a p

¶30. (C) Middle East Peace Process: Sarkozy will want to hear about our efforts to convene a regional meeting in support of Israeli/Palestinian
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however, eager to play some sort of role. Sarkozy has taken to using his bona fides as a "friend of Israel" to call on it for more "creativity"

¶31. (C) France-EU: President Sarkozy was instrumental in re-activating the moribund political reform process in the European Union with the Ju

¶32. (C) Colombia: Sarkozy promised during his presidential campaign to work for the release of Franco-Colombian FARC hostage Ingrid Betancourt

¶33. (SBU) GMO Moratorium: When Sarkozy came into office not only did he create a 'mega' environment ministry, but he also directed it to under

¶34. (C) Darfur (and Chad, Central African Republic): Sarkozy demonstrated an immediate renewed interest in Africa

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upon entering office, with France calling for and organizing the June 25 ministerial conference on Darfur, which served to refocus international
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Stapleton